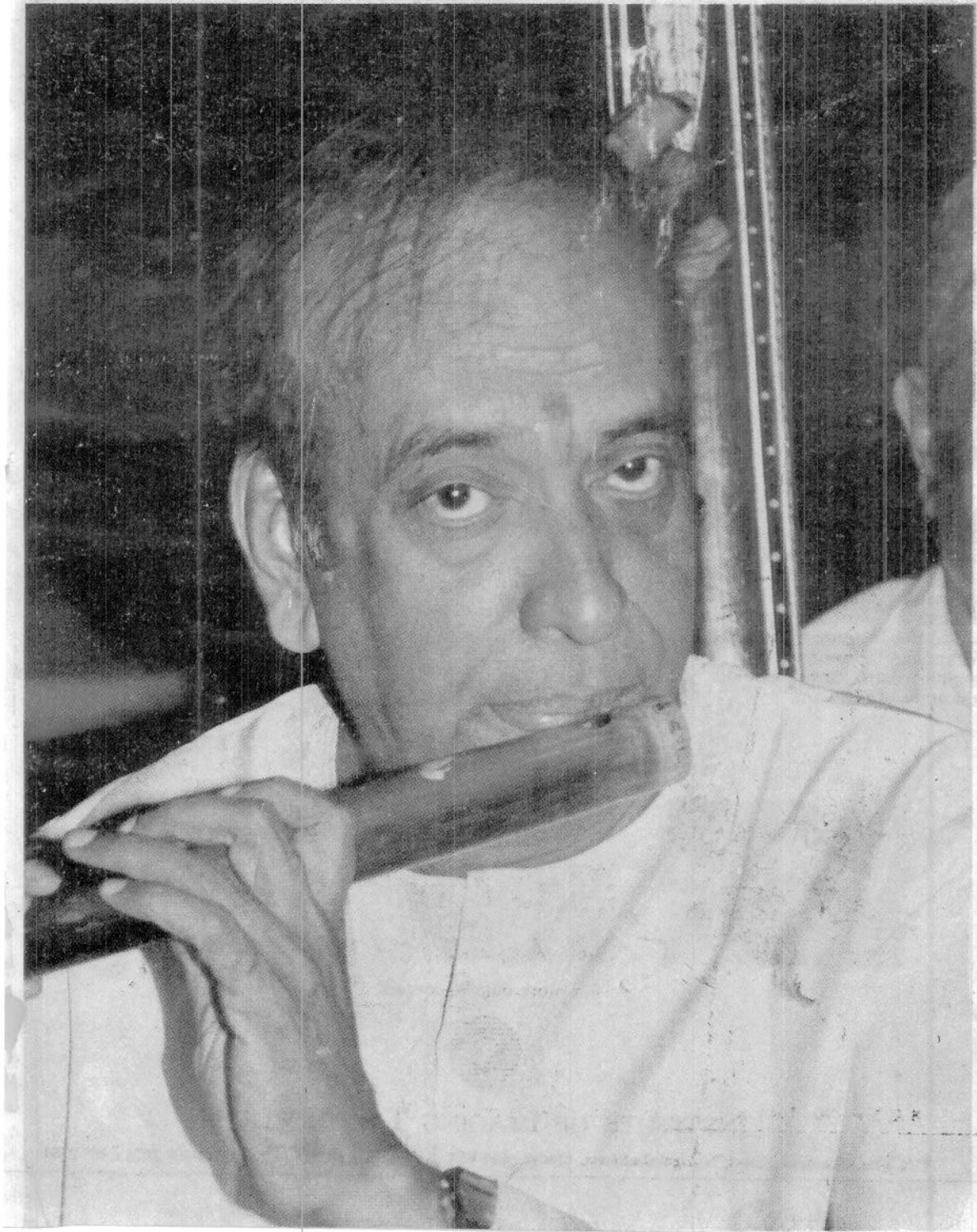


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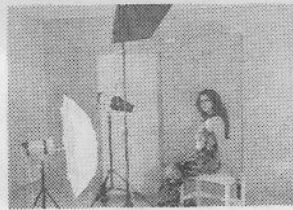
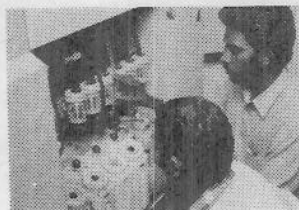
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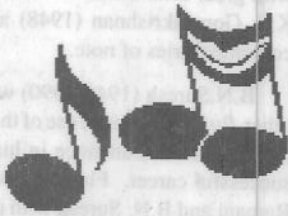


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Cover Story

In the FOOTSTEPS of MALI

Bangalore K Venkataram



N.Ramani (R) with Dindigul Natarajan

Noted flute artiste N.Ramani (born 1934) was the recipient of the coveted "Sangeetha Kalanidhi" honour of the Madras Music Academy for the year. This is an occasion to reminisce on the development of Flute as a solo concert instrument and the contribution of some of the artistes who revelled in the flautine art.

Flute is said to be the first instrument called Venu with its origin as a simple Bamboo piece in the field of instrumental music. Venu and Veena were used as accompaniments to vocal artistes. It was in use for support in orchestration for dances and group recitals.

It was Sarabha Sastry (1870-1904), a blind flutist who passed away in his 32nd year who gave the instrument an independent status as a solo major instrument.

Palladam Sanjeevi Rao (1882-

1962) was a highly successful concert artiste who put the flute at the concert platform. He was the first flutist to be honoured with the "Sangeetha Kalanidhi" in 1943. Tiruppambaram Swaminatha Pillai (1898-1961) next got this honour in 1953. T. Viswanthan (1926) was the third in the line 1988.

It was the flute wizard T.R. Mahalingam (1926-1986), popularly known as Mali who brought about a metamorphosis of the flautine art. By adopting the cross-fingering techniques, Mali was able to bring out all the gamakas, thereto unheard of and intoned all the microtones. The "sukha raga bhava" in any sophisticated gamaka could be brought out by Mali.

The state-of-art of the instrument has undergone a sea-change for the better. Dindigal S.P. Natarajan and N.Ramani, disciples of Mali used the Mali technique on the concert dais

with great eclat Sikkil sisters (1930), K.S. Gopalakrishnan (1948) are the contemporaries of note.

B.N.Suresh (1946-1990) was another flutist who made use of the Mali techniques in abundance in his brief successful career. Flute duets of N. Ramani and B.N. Suresh with double mridangam accompaniment of Tanjore Upendran and this writer were great events presented at various places like Madurai, Coimbatore, Ooty, Tanjore etc., fondly remembered by connoisseurs even today.

N. Ramani, the disciple of Mali appeared at the Madras Music Academy in 1956. In addition to Mali's techniques, Ramani has developed and established his own individual style. The major difference between Mali and Ramani has been the "Sruthi" Mali would not accept anything less than "G" (5) and phoo-phooed the lower sruthis. Ramani chose "Dis" (21/2) and successfully developed his own style after the VVV (Venu-Veena-Violin) concerts with Lalgudi Jayaraman and R.Venkataraman.

Ramani sustained himself with his improved techniques of a profuse mix-up of Duritha (speed) phrase in his Kalpana Swaraprastharas. This has projected Ramani in a specific separate exclusive style of his own. His use of a long flute to produce the "Mandhra" and "Anumandhra" shthayees with a cool breeze, similar to the "Bansuri" of the Hindustani variety are his exclusive attainments. His 'Jugalbandis' with Hariprasad Chaurasia brought him reknown at the National level. Ramani's countless number of tours abroad has brought him international acclaim. He founded the Ramani Academy of Flute in 1983 to propagate his art.

Ramani is the fourth flutist to have been honoured with the "Sangeetha Kalanidhi" in the 70th Conference of the Madras Music Academy, which honour he richly deserves. His adherence to traditional values coupled with his innovative improvement in his flautine art have been recognised by the lay and the cognizant alike. *

Editorial

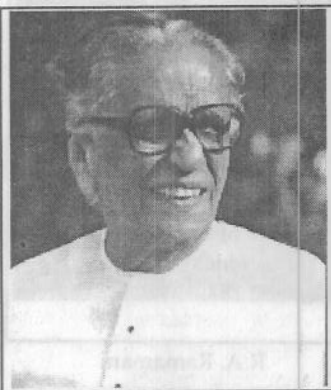
The recent economy drive of the Union Government is not without its debilitating repercussions in the field of music. Its first casualty are the musicians affiliated to the AIR, Mysore. They have been asked to do with the electronic tamboora instead of the dependable traditional one. This because there is no proposal to fill up the post of the lone tamboora artiste who recently retired. Earlier, the other artiste also retired and the post has remained vacant with no hope of replacement. No doubt the same rule is being applied to other categories too. But in them there is no dearth for alternatives. Which is not the case with the tamboora artiste as it determines the very quality of music. It only betrays the callous indifference of the concerned ministry or its utter ignorance of the importance of 'sruti' in music. A Hindustani vocalist in a similar situation would revolt at the prospect of singing with the electronic gadget. But his Carnatic counterpart is seemingly ever willing to compromise even though it is detrimental to his prospects. This indeed is unfortunate.

The electronic gadget is revolutionary in its concept and is certainly not without its usefulness. It comes in very handy in practice sessions, especially for the instrumentalists. But for the vocalist the traditional tamboora is well nigh irreplaceable. Nay it would be suicidal for him to resort to the novelty as it has been seen in many a concert on stage. Indeed it is easier for the singer to get attuned to the drone emanating from the tamboora at the ear level than its counterpart place before him/her. Hence the former's inevitability, besides the aesthetic aura it lends to the very setting.

Even otherwise, it appears as though Karnataka comes last in the priorities of the I & B ministry. When one of its own compatriots assumed the office as the minister for the all-important ministry, the least the Kannadigas all over expected is a status equal to the metropolitan character of Bangalore. But the incumbent seems to be more loyal to his native Kerala than the State which has sent him to the Upper House, the credentials for his present status. As it is, Kerala enjoys a short-wave facility and recently an announcement said it would soon be on FM band. On the contrary, the FM band which was on trial in Bangalore has suddenly become silent. Its trial broadcasts have altogether gone off the air, presumably in the absence of adequate staff.

A short-wave facility for the State is of greater importance, especially after it has come into focus on the national level. That has been the complaint of the Delhi Karnataka Sangha which has submitted a memorandum to both the Prime Minister and the Broadcasting Minister. Inter alia, the memorandum explained that only Kannadigas among all the major linguistic groups in Delhi were deprived of listening to programmes in their language and to know about the happenings in the State first hand. According to the Sangha sources, both of them had promised to expedite the matter. That was soon after the UF government had assumed office at the Centre. All one hopes is that it will materialise during their tenure which itself is a matter for conjecture. And if it doesn't, there is little doubt that the position will be back to square one! Which means a golden opportunity lost!

S.N.Chandrasekhar



Calling AIR

The feature on Thyagiah's 'Divya-nama Sankeertana' has already revealed how edifying a chorus could be when the lyric, the raga and bhava coalesce. Indeed, the credit for achieving such harmony should go to M. Balamurali Krishna who has directed the lilting music.

Sources reveal that its duration is 30 half hour sessions. Some even doubted how it could last so long as there are not more than 30-32 kritis under that head. However, on verification one finds the exact number is 88 (vide Kalluri Veerabhadra Sastry's Thyagaraja Keertanalu -- Visesha Vivaranamu -- 1975). That is sufficient to last the intended course. What- ever, there is no doubt that it is a memorable series, one that bears repetition.

Reverting to the routine, a focus on three veena recitals, each of a different generation could be an ideal start for this instalment. **Chitra Lingam** of the younger generation has already made a name for sustained tonality. The Shahana varnam fol-

lowed by a crisp Mohana-Kalyani piece (Sep 20, 9-15 am) gave her a flying start. Her prelude for Bindumalini (Entamuddu) was pleas-



V. Doreswamy Iyengar

ing for its exalting aural edifice. The kriti itself acquired a lilting flavour, the racy Raja-Raja in Niroshthi lending the recital a delightful finale.

The seasoned **R. Visveswaran** of Mysore featured in the National Programme (Sep 21, 9-30 pm) belongs to the current generation. He opened with a spacious alap for Dhenuka. It was neat and rich in 'gamaks', providing the Thyagaiah kriti Teliyaleru a solid base. The kriti with some alluring 'swara' passages left a lingering impact. But the alap for Kambodi did not rise to such heights.

The well-known **V. Doreswamy Iyengar**, representing the aging generation was the other artiste among the trio. His recital on Gandhi Jayanti day (Oct 2, 9-30 pm) had V.S. Rajagopal (mridangam) and Bangalore K Venkatram (ghatam) for rhythmical support, a reassuring combination indeed. Bhavanuta, the stately Mohana kriti gave the veteran a rollicking start, though the rendition was not free from

slips. His alap for Bhuvanagandhari (Lalitambike) steadied down, but it was evident that his grip on the instrument is lax, the aging taking its toll. His best, no doubt, is far behind him. But Pranatarthihara, the masterpiece of Vasudevacharya in Janjhooti was thoroughly enjoyable, its lilting laya giving it a haunting tilt.

Another veteran who was on the AIR around the same time (Sep 25, 9-30 pm) was **R.R. Keshavamurthy** on the violin. Even as he intonated Vardini (Manasa, Manasa), it was evident that he was in fine fettle. It was disposed of with the usual elan, though not without its harsh overtones. His alap for Deepak (Kalanerchina) was more reposeful, though the kriti bristled with some jarring notes.

Earlier (Sep 21, 10 pm) in the South Zone hook-up a mellifluous voice was heard. It was that of **Mini**, not a familiar name. But her venugana (Kedaragoula), followed by spacious alap for Kalyani (Pankaja Lochana) had lingering effect. It was a surprise packet. But the vocal of **Saraswati Ramachandran** (Sep 25, 9-30 am) was short in its resonance due to an unsteady 'sruti'. Whether it was Kanjadalayatakshi or the main raga Shanmukhapriya (Vadane), the format was in tact. Yet it failed to make an impact due to shortfalls in 'sruti'. Much the same is the case with the flute recital of the senior **K.P. Upadhyaya** (Sep 27, 8-30 am). The tonal fidelity in Navarasakannada



R.R. Keshavamurthy



R.A. Ramamani

(Neepadamu) and Gourimanohari (Guruleka) could never be disputed. That was in the 'Madhya Sthayi'. Once the rendition drifted to the upper octave, it went off the tune marring the impress no end. H.K. Narasimhamurthy's violin support was one of the highspots of the recital.

'Intakante', the Thyagaiah offering in Kannada gave **R.A. Ramamani** a bumptious start. Its steady pace and sonority paved the way for a cozy feeling. Her alap for Mukhari was as enduring, the enchanting Ksheenamai rising the emotional fervour to a trance. A.R. Krishnamurthy's subtle touches on the violin complemented Rama's rendition with as much sensitivity.

For **G. Rajanarain** (Oct 4, 9-15 am) the Kapi piece was totally unimpressive. Even the seasoned S. Seshagiri Rao's solid violin support could not lift it from its low-key imagery. But Shahana (Vandanamu) changed the whole complexion of the concert. The kriti assumed a stately presence, a few gorgeous 'swara' korvais enriching its structural identity.

Suma Sudhindra was in as good a nick as she started her veena recital (Oct 9, 9-30 am) with the even paced Eccharikaga (Yadukula-Kambodi). Her crisp alap for Kapi (Intasoukhyia) was equally impressive, despite a few slips in the fingering. But Varali (Mamava Meenakshi) put the concert in a solid mould. The alap itself was well proportioned, the kriti acquiring a delightful presence.

Ratnakanchuka Dharini the Kambodi masterpiece has almost been dumped, having become a forgotten melody. It was the piece selected for her recital by **Jambu Kannan** (Oct 9, 8-30 am). But it belied the expectation, the timbre in her voice having faded beyond recognition. But **G.R. Jaya** (Oct 10, 9-15 am) was in fine fettle as she started with a sharp alap for Thodi. It was a good effort, the lovely



Suma Sudhindra

Rajavedala enlivened with some lovely 'sancharas'. Shanmukhapriya was equally impressive, sustained in the rare kriti Parvatinayaka. She is certainly capable of rising higher to meet aesthetic elegance. R. Rajalakshmi on violin and R.A. Rajagopalan on mridangam lent Jaya commendable support.

Lalita Nagarajan's Ramanannu (Harikambodi) on the next day at 9-15 showed she has yet to hone her voice fully to add glitter to her style. Her alap for Kalyani (Kamalamba) was in shape though it was the renowned kriti that lent credibility to the melody. S. Seshagiri Rao's violin support was solid.

T. Sharada on her veena has been known for her consistency which was substantiated as she opened (Oct 13, 8-30 am) with Sri Saraswati (Arabhi).



Rajalakshmi Tirunarayan

It had a lovely gait, Bhairavi (Neepadamulani) emerging as majestically. The impact bristled with an enduring quality. But her senior N. **Chokkamma** who lends her own vocal refrain to her veena left little to write home about (Oct 15, 8-30 am). Neither her Natakuranji (Mamava) nor the Hamsanandi piece that followed could bear testimony to a radiant past. It is a feeble replica. More surprising was the lack of form in **R.S. Nandakumar's** recital (1-30

pm same day). His Bhairavi piece is rarely heard on the concert stage. But neither the alap nor the kriti itself could sustain, as slips kept intruding at will.

Some imaginatively conceived 'taans' lent a dignified charm to **Jayatkumar Das's** Parameswari on the sitar (Oct 17, 8-30 am). It was a cool, calm and sustained effort that made for pleasant listening. Hamsini Nagendra who followed him at 9-15 was in as good a mettle. The Bilahari piece gave her a fine start. But the alap for Dharmavati was a trifle short in its resonance, though the unfailing kriti Durgadevi restored credibility. All the same, a sense of complacency could not be missed.

It is here that Rudrapatnam duo **Thyagarajan and Tara-nathan** cannot be faulted. Their Shuddha-Saveri showed them in a buoyant mood. It was a classic picture of the haunting melody. Kokilapriya (Manayata) kept up the tempo to leave an indelible impact on the listeners. **V. Kalavati** (9-15 the same morning) was in as fine a fettle. Right from the opening Nata (Kanjadalaya) piece her voice touched the peak form. Especially pleasing was the leisurely alap for Kalyani. The lovely kriti Biranavara in Tishra-nadai was invested with some enervating 'swara' kovais. A sure sign of her steady progress.

G.Ramesh (Oct 22, 8-30 am) was as refreshing as he intoned a leisurely Simhendramadhyama. The alap was

reposeful, redolent with some chiselled 'sancharas' associated with it. The kriti Kamakshi was rendered with as much confidence, an array of lovely 'swara' passages embellishing its format. But D.N. Guru Dutt who followed at 9-15 am; could not sustain, his Anandabhairavi classic 'O Jagadamba' lapsing into insignificance because of persistent slips in 'sruti'.

Rajalaskhmi Tirunarayan's veena recital on the following day (8-30 am) lived upto her reputation. Her prelude in Bilahari for the weighty Sri Balasubramanya gave a good idea of the feast that was to follow. Rightly, the rendition of the kriti gave a dignified picture of the soulful melody. Equally engrossing was the Kapi piece, rich in its tonal flourishes.

The popular local duo, **R.K. Padmanaha and D.V. Nagarajan** was in as consistent a form as ever. Drawing their inspiration from a lovely ode to Ganapathi in Amritavahini the duo built a reverberating base in Madhyamavati Ramakatha. And what



G.R. Jaya

a sustained quality of melodic grace it turned out to be! The same rollicking tempo was maintained by R.S. Ramakanth (Oct 23, 9-30 am). His Bhairavi stood out for its classic imagery, the kriti Thanayuni redolent with

nostalgic overtones. A reassuring recital.

Padma Murthy who was not heard for long on the AIR was back on Nov 5. Her piece in Saraswati appeared sedate in essence. But her veena seemingly came alive as she meditatively dwelt on Bhairavi. The alap was not without its misgivings, but the kriti Lalithe brimmed with confidence to emerge as a solid piece. **K.G. Kanakalakshmi** is another artiste who will never disappoint. Her recital (Nov 15, 8-30 am) substantiated the belief. The number Yaro Bandaru is by no means a familiar composition. But her alap for the raga Shanmukhapriya and the facile way the words blended with the melody was proof of her craftsmanship. It was hearty listening, thanks to her cultivated voice. ♦

ESSENCE

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Calendar Released



Dr Raja Ramanna, released a calendar on musicians brought out by Ananya, an organisation for the promotion of music and arts, at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja, Bangalore.

Releasing the calendar Dr Ramanna said that calendar art has come longway in our country and lauded the efforts of Raghavendra Rao in bringing out the pictorial calendar.

Portraits of Veena Seshanna, Veena Subbanna, Vasudevachar, Bidaram Krishnappa, Muthiah Bhagavathar and T.Chowdiah have been published in this calendar.

The unique calendar which is priced at Rs.20-00 can be had from Ananya, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560003.

Gwalior Festival

A three day festival of music in memory of the renowned sarod maestro, Ustad Hafeez Ali Khan was inaugurated by Vijayaraje Sindia on Nov 21, 96 at Gwalior.

Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma (Santoor), Hari Prasad Chourasia (flute) V.G.Jog (violin), Rahmat Ali Khan (vocal) and Amjad Ali Khan (sarod) son of Hafiz Ali Khan participated in the festival.

This festival was organised by the Hafiz Ali Khan Memorial Trust.

Thyagaraja Aradhana

Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana Samithi, Srirangapatna is organising the Thyagaraja aradhana from January 28 to 30, 97 at the Sri Kodandarama temple, Bazar Street, Srirangapatna.

N.S. Krishna
Murthy, retired
Director of AIR
Bangalore was
on a visit to
the USA on an
invitation.

US Salutes Purandara

A set pattern has evolved for a mini concert over the years. A varna or a kriti in a madhyama kala to begin with, gradually building up the tempo with more elaborate item reaching a climax with a ragam, tanam and pallavi or a detailed exposition of a major raga, kriti nerval and swara followed by javali, thillana and lighter items like bhajan and devaranamas have been generally accepted on constituting a balanced fare.

The concert must have a variety of raga, tala and items of different vaggeyakaras. However there are special occasions when a concert is wholly devoted to a single composer in order to pay homage and highlight his musical genius.

One such concert was held in New Jersey (USA) in November 1996 as part of Purandara Dasotsava. "We wanted to present Purandara Dasa compositions in a classical mould and not just as post-pallavi items", explained K.K. Ramamurthy one of the organisers who along with his wife Kamala has been playing enthusiastic hosts to many of our senior artistes who visit US on concert tours.

A full length concert of only devaranamas is a risky proposition because we still do not have commonly accepted notations for them. More often than not the ragas and mattu chosen by artistes fail to evoke the sentiment of the devaranama.

But it goes to the credit of Vani Sateesh who was the artiste of the evening for giving a very soothing and satisfying performance for over three hours. Her rich repertoire and manodharma were fully evident

throughout the concert and a full house was treated to a thoroughly enjoyable programme by this young artiste of Mysore settled down in USA after her marriage.

Vani made an auspicious beginning with 'Sripathiyu emage sampada veeyali' in Sri. It was clever handling of swara prasthara, making use of the opening swara phrases of 'endaro mahanu bhavalu' charanas. She then sang 'Ramamanthra japiso' in Kānada before taking up 'Yare Rangana' in Hindola with a detailed raga alapana.

Instead of the customary beginning, she sang the pallavi like GSNDM GSN SMS. The swara singing for 'kariraja varadana' starting from 3 1/2 akshara from sama was skilfully handled.

'Swami mukhya prana' in Ananda Bhairavi, 'yeke nirdaya nadeyo' in Ranjani, 'neene gati' in ragamalika consisting of Patdeep, Des and Dwijawanti were gone through in quick succession before she took up a fairly detailed alapana in Mukhari and rendered 'ēchharadali nade' in mishra chapu. The structure of the composition is such that it hardly permits any sangatis. One felt a detailed alapana for such a composition was disproportionate.

However Vani deserves to be praised for attempting a raga which is rarely heard these days. The main item chosen for the evening was 'ninna nodi dhanya nadenu' in Pantuvarali. The tune is almost identical with Thyagaraja's 'ninna neranammi nanura'. The nerval for 'desha desha thirugi nanu' and swara prasthara lent

a high degree of classicism to the concert.

What followed after the thani avarthanam by Balachander (mrida-ngam) and Murali Balachander (kanjira) were in the lighter genre, 'Ninnantha swami' - ugabhoga and 'neene doddavanu' in Revathi and other popular numbers like 'tarakka bindige' and 'jagadhodharana' were rendered with full of feeling.

Vani was ably accompanied on violin by her husband Sateesh who is basically a computer engineer. He had made use of thicker gauge strings which enabled him to play in the same octave in which the vocalist was singing. Thereby he was not sounding too shrill which is inevitable when accompanying ladies with high pitched voices. One wished that percussionists were more subdued and sober.

The concert was held in the basement of Ramamurthy's spacious bungalow. He has very tastefully treated the hall and has made it acoustically perfect. Listening was a pleasant experience with superb sound system.

Shyamala Bhawe

Shyamala G Bhawe, has been appointed Chairperson of the Karnataka Sangeetha Nruthya Academy.

The post fell vacant following the resignation Chandrabhaga Devi due to illhealth.



Down Memory Lane

Bangalore K Venkatram

-3

GNB was a crusader of a new wave of "Birka" filled music. A prince among musicians, GNB's concerts drew packed houses. GNB-Chowdiah-Mani trio at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja in Shankariah Hall was always an eagerly awaited event.

While Rs 4 was charged for the first class for major concerts, a special hike to Rs 6 was levied for this trio and the hall and even the area nearer the fenced pendal would be overflowing. The concerts were of a very high order, pleasing to the innocent and the cognizant.

The renditions of "Radha Sametha Krishna", "Himagiri Thanaye", "Sarasa Samadana" were always received with thunderous applause with Palghat Mani in the focus, himself singing as it were on the mridangam.

Elaborate alapana of Kalyani followed by a crisp rendition of "Vasudeva Eni" invested with nerval at 'Raga Thala Gathulanu Paaduchunu' and a flurry of kalapana swaras are musical presenting ever green in the memory of even the aristocrats connoisseurs.

GNB's 12-minute rendering of Malavi is still haunting me. In those days when small Janaka ragas were not dealt with in such detail, most of the audience were left wondering what the rage could be. When he took up 'Nenarunchinana' there was a hush and lull and they traced the raga finally!

GNB had a command on musical mathematics. His pallavis, though short could be a testing time for those

flanking him.

Aesthetics were never sacrificed in the presentation. To cite an instance, GNB was seated for a programme with Chowdiah and Mani. The programme was to commence at 4.15 pm. This writer had gone with Chowdiah and the duo had landed in time. So did GNB. Mani Iyer was not there and there was no indication as to why he was delayed and when he was expected.

It was learnt that Mani Iyer had not arrived in town at all. No nearby artiste was readily available. Chowdiah did not want the concert cancelled. (He was worried about the loss of his remuneration!). He sent for a mridangam from the residence of a nearby local vidwan. In consultation with GNB, I was directed to take up the mridangam!

I was totally unnerved and ex-

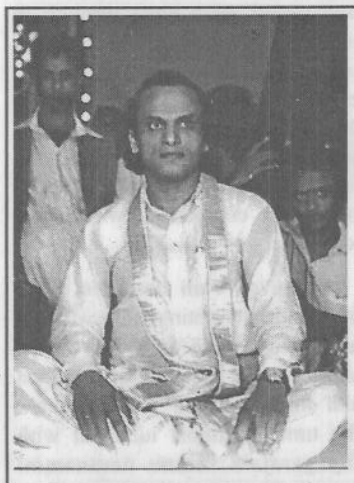
plained that I was no match for them. But they convinced me saying that immediately Mani Iyer arrived, I could make way for him and that this could not be done with other artistes.

Finally, I consented and the concert began with right earnest Mani Iyer did not turn up at all. But GNB managed it all so tactfully that nobody could feel the difference. He instilled so much confidence in me that nothing went amiss.

Gradually, during the progress of the concert, I was also gaining confidence that I could manage the situation that day and salvage the issue. Looking satisfied with the confidence built up in me, GNB told me that I could play my solo turn in the pallavi itself. Again I was perplexed and he told me that the pallavi was very simple. He took up Ananda Bhairavi with an elaborate alapana in three stages rendered thanam at length and took up a short pallavi in Adi Tala, single kalai with 1 1/2 eduppu. No pallavi could be more simpler!

The 'spread' of the pallavi was "Parvathi Paramananda Bhairavi".

I was very happy at the simple structure and played with confidence. Later, as the Sahitya Vinyasa continued GNB made the 'spread' quite sophisticated and resorted to the thrikala. He demonstrated that it is not "what" is rendered that is important, but "how" it could be interpreted without sacrificing the Raga 'bhava' or the underlining Sukha-Bhava. He used to revel in singing such very short pallavis in what appeared to be very tough to handle. His rendition of "Gana Lola Karuna-alavaala" in single



M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar

kalai Adi and resorting it in thrissra with thrikala exhibited his acute musicianship with equal expertise in raga and laya. Sometime in July 96, a video cassette prepared by N. Pattabhiraman of the Sruti Foundation was presented in a programme entitled, "GNB Sangita Darshana" for the Karnataka Ganakala Parishath and Ananya in Bangalore. It was an exhaustive analysis of GNB's music by a group of musicians and scholars. GNB entered the field when greats like Palghat Rama Bhagavathar, Chembai, Ariyakudi, Maharajapuram, Madurai Mani and Semmangudi were on the scene. How he became one with them is available in that exhaustive, highly informative scholarly study.

GNB was heard in the company of comparatively younger but versatile accompanists like Lalgudi Jayaraman and Palghat Raghu in those days and brought out the essence of classical Carnatic music. His passing away in 1965 created a void not adequately filled even today. He was a very successful teacher. (M.L. Vasanthakumari, Radha Jayalakshmi, T.R. Balu (died very young), Kalyanaraman, V. Ramachandran and a host of disciples) and an able administrator (In charge of the Swati Tirunal Academy and Producer of Music, AIR). He was a charismatic artiste (acted with M.S. Subbulakshmi in Shakuntala). He did create an individual style of his own, the GNB bani, nurtured by many youngsters even to this day.

Two other artistes from the cine world who were not adequately recognised in the arena, but popular in the fifties in the film field and dished out chaste music are M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar and M.M. Dandapani Desigar. My acquaintance with them and association was very short but the concerts I played with them are worth remembering. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, MKT as he was known, was a prolific singer. Very popular in Tamil films and a rage in his days. He had undergone vigorous training under Alathur Venkatesa Iyer (father of Alathur Siva Subramanya Iyer of Alathur Brothers) and possessed a rich



GNB

tonal timbre.

Once for a concert arranged at Denkanikota, Madurai Venugopal (violin), M.L. Veerabhadriah and myself (Ghatam) we travelled in a car. Right through the route, it was frequent stops for garlanding MKT. We used to proceed a few miles and throw away the garlands to clear the car of the load and to be reloaded at the next stop! We reached the concert arena.

The stage was erected at the centre of a huge open air garden. It was with great difficulty that we walked up to the dais. MKT gave me his silver kooja and some volunteers took away our instruments. As we were walking through, there was a stampede to see MKT and I felt the handle of the Silver kooja weightless! The bottom had been screwed and taken away, leaving only the lid in my hands. My shouts to tell MKT was in vain and we finally reached the dais.

As I was explaining the loss of the kooja, some MKT-fan produced it and explained that he had no other way out to meet MKT in person! While 2 or 3 songs were over, there was a huge cry for film songs and they wanted "Manmada Leelaiyam Venraal Undo". MKT commenced the song. In between the song there is a dialogue when the songster says "Swami" before continuing the song. Immediately "Swami" was uttered Veerabhadriah responded saying "What sir?" The vociferous merry response of the crowd was uncontrollable! MKT died

in 1959.

Dandapani Desigar was well known for his devotional Tamil songs. Stalwarts like Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai used to accompany him on violin. Desigar presided over the Tamil Isai Sangam Music Conference and received the "Isai Perarignar" title. He was the recipient of the Sangeet Natak Academi Award, Kalaimamani title and so on. He had a rich, emotional voice and had acted in several Tamil films like Nandanar with Kothamangalam Subbu, Pattinathar Thayumanavar, Manickavachakar etc. In a concert for the Congress exhibition at the Subhash Nagar grounds (now the Bangalore Bus Station) in 1960's Desigar rendered a memorable concert. He passed away in 1973.

The great Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer, the mentor of the all time great Palghat Mani Iyer who passed away in 1947, played with Tanjore Lakshminarayana Iyer at the Gayana Samaja sometime in 1946. He created a style of mridangam play known as the Tanjore school and trained masters like T.K. Murthy.

Bangalore Nagarathnammal, who was responsible for building up a shrine for Saint Thyagaraja at Tiruvaiyaru was a great exponent of Carnatic music. She visited Bangalore for a fund raising concert for the Tiruvaiyaru Thyagaraja Shrine. Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar, the then Diwan who was the chief guest at her benefit concert at the Town Hall was requested by Nagarathnammal for the monetary assistance and the Diwan obliged! *

(To be concluded)

For a ringside
View of Music
World
Read

PHOENIX



Rangashree

DANCING All the Way

Chandrasekhar

The last few weeks of 1996 saw veritable spurt in dancing activities in the City, as though the young and seasoned dancers were out to reach a target they had set for themselves! The programmes were as crowded as it has been with music in recent times, 'rangapraveshas', a dance feature or two, and an array of 'sadors' filling the bill.

It all started with the annual art festivals, the Sharad Vaibhava of Pratibha Prahlad, Karthik Fine Arts festival of Suma Sudheendra and Rangashree festival of D.Subbaramiah Fine Arts Trust. By and large each presented a mixed fare of music and dance.

Like all these festivals, the Venkatesha Natya Mandira of Radha Sridhar had an ambitious programme. Besides presenting a few seasoned students of the school, it had thrown open the stage to several guest artistes too.

The senior-most among them was undoubtedly Vasundhara Doreswamy of Mysore. An intelligent adoption of Thyagaiah's kriti Ganamurte vouched for her choreographic skill. Some

attractive Sthanakas coupled with meaningful, if wee bit loud, Abhinaya, heightened its popular appeal.

Rangashree was another invited artiste of repute. She was as confident as ever in her interpretation for the celebrated Kambodi varnam



Sumana Nagesh

(Nadanai). The Nritya was emphasised by spacious Adavus, though her Abhinaya tended to be a trifle dramatic.

In its turn, Nupura presented one of its successful experiments. In her choreography for Suladis, its director Lalitha Srinivasan showed the dancerly possibilities of the tested musical form. But instead of a quartet which inevitably cuts into the fluidity, a solo perhaps could have been more purposeful. Though the interpretation was convincing, the staid movement appeared rather monotonous.

Among the Mandira's incumbents, neither the US-based Rupa Shamsundar nor the out-of-form Manasa Prakash could make a mark. The exclusion of Nritya oriented items itself was a pointer to their lack of confidence. Nor did their Abhinaya pieces serve them any better. If Manasa's facials failed to go beyond the superficialities, Rupa seemed to rely more on the descriptive than on Rasabhinaya. Even here the portrayal was on a low key as exemplified in Varnalampo (Manji).

It is here that Sumana Nagesh, another student of Radha Sridhar, presently under the tutelage of M.R. Krishnamurthy, displayed greater depth in both the aspects. The very leisurely pace in the tested Thodi varnam (Rupamu Joochi) accounted for her steady stance, Suma executing the well-knit Adavus with quiet confidence. Her Abhinaya, unfolding the Virahotkhandita, was as impressive, though her 'drishti' could do with some brushing up.

Poornima Ashok

The way Poornima Ashok uses her 'drishti' could be a pointer to others. Her feature for the Rangashree festival was on Krishna, based on a variety of compositions available on the subject. The choreography was simple, the movements were not as dynamic as one associated with Poornima, but the expression of this senior student of Radha was almost compensating for the shortcomings.



Mahita Nagaraj and
Poornima Sagar
Indeed, that carried the day.

Sohanlal Memorial

The annual Sohanlal memorial dance recital for the Malleswaram Sangeeta Sabha featured Vrinda Nanavati, a Kalakshetra product. Petite and prim, Vrinda is known for consistency and with vocalist Srivats also in form, the Alaripu and Jatiswaram (Saveri) gave her a good



Vrinda nanavati

start. Her Nritya as adumbrated in the celebrated Kambodi varnam (Nadanai) raised the fare to its rhythmic heights. Her portrayal of the Virahotkhandita was also precise, her trained 'drishti' carrying conviction. But her 'aharya', especially the facial make-up appeared so colourless that the overall effect got utterly stunted.

Around the same time, Natyashree in association with the Bangalore Lalitkala Parishat presented Srividya Murthy, the US-based steady student of Kamala Narayanan. From the invocatory, it was obvious that Vidya has grown in stature. True, the descriptive in Kamala Jasana (Ragamalika) of Swatiturnal offered little scope for abhinaya. But her Nritya, dotted by liberal Utplavanas and variegated Adavus was absorbing. A glimpse of her maturity in Abhinaya was also evident in her portrayal of the Khandita in the Javali Nee mata sala (Purvikalyani).

Praiseworthy

Though seemingly less involved, the Abhinaya of Poornima Sagar and Mahita Nagaraj, students of Padmini Rao was equally praiseworthy. More so as they were obliged to fulfil an obligation under the shadow of a gruesome accident in which their Guru only on the day before had badly fractured her leg. It was an interesting fare, Poornima's interpretation for the popular Bagilana Theredu and Mahita's portrayal of Parakiya in Evvade O Bhama (Shankarabharana) standing out for their pointed Abhinaya and neat 'angikas'.

Rangapraveshas

The period witnessed two Rangapraveshas, Smitha.K, student of Meenakshisundaram Centre and Mrudul Rajburgi, student of Nupura. Smitha has talent, the only drawback being a bit heavy on her feet. Her Abhinaya also has to gain in depth as could be seen in the day's varnam (Khamas).

Mrudul, however, was more agile, her movements overall testifying to her self-assurance. Mrudul's



Srividya Murthy

Abhinaya was especially impressive. The facile manner in which she interpreted the Kalahantarita in the Ashtapadi (Madhava Makurau) revealed a clear understanding of the art.

As convincing was Pamadi Yashodhara, another student of Meenakshisundaram Centre, a day earlier. Hers was a compact fare, in which the Thodi varnam (Kopamela) stood out for its coherence between a trite Nritya and an austere Abhinaya. SNC



Poornima Ashok

Tuneful Encounters-11

S.N. Sivaswamy

Music Between Two Rivers

Winter in our country is a season to celebrate. With Christmas and New Year, with music and art festivals, melas, jambories, industrial fairs, trade exhibitions and gala shopping sprees. The temperature in many of the northern cities and tourist places hovers around zero degree centigrade, which is a shade uncomfortable for those of us in the rest of India. Nevertheless winter is the best time to travel, with no rain, clear atmosphere though of course, misty, and plenty of a variety of fruits and other food available everywhere.

I spent three winters in Jullunder in Punjab after it had ceded its position as state capital to Chandigarh. The mercury in winter in that Cantonment City, especially in mid winter, which is the last week of December, stayed under five degree centigrade. They were surely the coldest days of the year.

This was the week Jullunder chose to commemorate a nineteenth century musician of the region, Baba Harvallabh. The Baba was somewhat akin to Baiju Bawra of Akbar's days in that he was a mendicant devoted to music. A samadhi has been built by the people of Do-aba (meaning two rivers, Beas and Sutlej, between which lies an area known for its rich soil fertility and plentifulness of sub-soil water) in the Devi Talab tank bed on the outskirts of Jullunder City.

At this Samadhi many thousands of music lovers of Punjab gather for four days every December on the coldest days to listen to the greatest musi-

cians of the country in day-and-night long sessions during the biting chill of even the early hours.

Before coming to Jullunder, I had thought that Punjab's interest in music was restricted to its rich folk melodies like the songs accompanying the Bhangra and Giddha dances, the great folk operas like Heer-Ranjha, Mirza-Sahiban, Sassi-Punhu etc, besides the soulful shabad keertans of the Ragis. Soon I was to meet great musicians of the land like Sohan Singh (Faiaz Khan's disciple) and Dilip Chander Vedi and to be reminded that Punjab's Patiala was the home of the legendary Bade Gulam Ali Khan's gharana.

The Harvallabh mela is no doubt among the greatest musical events in the country. Every year, music enthusiasts are treated here to the cream of Indian music. Among the concerts I attended were those of Bismilla Khan, Ravi Shankar, Bhimsen Joshi... the list is endless.

Bade Gulam Ali Khan, the doyen of Patiala Gharana, was a regular performer at Harvallabh mela. The last time he sang there must have been his last public appearance. I can never forget his arrival on the platform that day. Thanks to my acquaintance with Ashwini Kumar (the former Indian hockey star and noted police officer) who was in charge of the organisation of the mela those days, I was able to secure for myself and my wife place close to the dais. That was the last opportunity I had of being present in

an audience listening to the Thumri Samrat. I also witnessed that day the most poignant scene. Bade Gulam Ali Khan was obviously too ill and could not climb up the steps to the dais. His son Munnawar Ali and a few other disciples had to virtually carry him and seat him in his place on the platform. Until he was properly seated, they had lowered the curtain, sparing the audience the sight of this agonising experience.

We had barely recovered from the shock of seeing the great musician's suffering when the curtain went up and a tumultuous applause rent the shamiana.

From the initial strains of the Swaramandal, through the majestic Calkaus followed by the unforgettable thumri and upto the culmination in the haunting Bhajan, 'Hari Om Tatsat', it was a feast for our ears and we had all forgotten that the maestro was ailing.

Academy Awards

Following are the winners of the Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy Award for 1996-97:

Carnatic Music: B. Krishnappa (vocal), A. Veerabhadraiah (violin), L. Bhimachar (morching), and H.S. Anasuya (special service).

Hindustani Music: M. Lakshman Gowda (vocal), K.S. Hadpada (tabla), Siddaramaswamy Korawar (vocal) and S.B. Hungund (harmonium).

Dance: Pratibha Prahlad, P. Rama (dance singing) Padmini Ravi and Chitra Venugopal (dance teaching).

Light Music: S. Somasundaram (vocal), B.V. Radhakrishna (instrumental) and Sulochana Venkatesh (vocal).

Katha Keerthana: B. Gurusiddappa, and K.S. Narayanacharya.

Kalashastra: Gauri Kuppaswamy and S.C. Sharma.

The award carries a cash prize of Rs. 5000, a citation and a memento.

SOULFUL HOMAGE

To a MAESTRO

The noteworthy achievement of the Gururao Deshpande Punya Smarane Samithi is the inculcation in music-lovers in the City of getting accustomed to the all-night concerts. Though such Mehfilis are common in the Hindustani music oriented northern districts of the State, back in Bangalore and the erstwhile State of Mysore dominated by its Carnatic counterpart the timings would rarely take one beyond 9:30p.m., spanning utmost four hours.

Came the Jalotas and the Chitra-Jagjit Singh duos, listeners started responding in their numbers to late night faressitting well past mid-night, enlivened by their sonorous ditties.

But Vinayak Torvi of the Samaroh has brought about a transformation in the attitude of the music buffs. As witnessed in the 14th anniversary of the Punya Smarane December 1, the Samaroh has become an accepted routine for avid Hindustani music lovers, so successful and so popular that the venue has moved from a small auditorium in the eighties to a specially erected, sprawling shamiana in the spacious forecourt of the Canara Union.

The fares in these solemn Mehfilis have become doubly attractive, several redoubtable masters in the genre filling the bill. A welcome departure of the annual homage-paying event is a slot for a session of Carnatic music. Such inter-action is nothing new in Carnatic music festivals, prestigious institutions like the Bangalore Gayana Samaja having had Hindusthani stalwarts like Mallikarjun Mansoor and Gangubai Hangal preside over its an-

nual conference.

But in the Hindustani music world, this is a new trend, beginning almost from the time the Samaroh moved over from Dharwad 10 years ago to the City. Now it has become an annual feature. In 1994 M.S. Sheela sang in the Mehfil and in 1995 it was Nagamani Srinath. Now it was M. Nagaraj, the young violin virtuoso who is a much-sought after accompanist, besides being as popular a soloist as in duet with his equally competent younger brother, M. Manjunath.

His solo in the fare came as a breath of fresh air after a rather dismal show in the inaugural concert by the Pune-based vocalist Prakash Ghangrekar. His Bageshri was mediocre, failing to live upto expectation. Notes seemed to stray into the essay at will to distort the very identity of the raga. Nor did his 'Tarana' in Malkus improve matters though the delineation struck to a known contour.

What a contrast it was when the repetitive Vatapi Ganapatim (Hamsadhvani) unfolded itself through the tuneful violin strings of Nagaraj! The alap for Shanmukhapriya in the stillness of the night was more reposeful, a flurry of sonorous 'sangatis' enriching its overtones. It was a solid prelude to a crisp Thanam to be followed by a robust Pallavi in 'chatushra'. The serene quality of the melody and its tonal fidelity should sure have made an impact on the packed audience.

Veteran Gangubai Hangal who had earlier inaugurated the festival, was undoubtedly a star attraction in

the programme. Abhogi gave the doyanne of the Kiran Gharana an imposing start. Her meditative alap sounded as though she was glorying in the notes, the effusion of 'taans' finding as alluring an intonation in the contrasting sonority of her daughter Krishna. Gangubai's Kalavati stood out for its refined exactitude and the Adana piece with which she rounded of her 100-minute rendition, was absorbing, bringing hallowed memories of the great Roshanara Begam.

The young flautist who followed was Praveen Godkhindi, son of Venkatesh Godkhindi, also a flautist who had the distinction of being the only Hindusthani artiste from the State to figure in the annual Radio Sangeet Sammelan-1996. He at once proved his mastery over the technique, the abandon with which he exfoliated the melody winning him unrestrained applause. It was a rewarding experience to watch the youngster wielding the difficult instrument with effortless ease.

The Mohanaveena recital of Vishwa Mohan Bhat as anticipated was the piece de resistance of the festival. His Jog straightaway provided his artistry, the jod-jhala foray casting a magic spell on the listeners who had kept wide awake for the blissful moment. The Maand 'gat' which the master intoned on request, had the same lingering flourish in which Ravindra Yavgal's competent tabala 'sathi' made as indelible an impact.

The concluding session which started almost in the wee hours of the next morning, was reserved for Vinayak Torvi, the worthy desciple of Pandit Deshpande whose memory the former was commemorating in such a fitting style. He had chosen Thodi for the main raga, the soulful melody assuming its dignified aura from the very outset. His airing of Deshkar and Jonpuri was as impressive. And as he rounded of his recital with the customary Bhairavi 'bandish', it was broad daylight, something the avid listeners realised only as they came out into the open! ♦ SNC



T.D. Rajendra and Nirupama in a Kathak Duet

Five young city dancers from Abhinaya Arts Centre, T.D. Rajendra, Nirupama Rajendra, Nandini Mehta, Sathyanarayan Raju and Murali Mohan were on a cultural tour of Switzerland and France performing classical and few folk dances of India.

In a span of 40 days in October - November figured in 16 performances, three workshops at various cities in Switzerland, Paris and France. The co-ordinator was based at Geneva, Sujatha Venkatesh, herself a Bharathanatyam dancer, teacher, senior disciple of Prof U.S. Krishna Rao and Chandrabhaga Devi.

The organisations included many Indian associations, Indo-Swiss, French and the Afghan associations who promote South Asian Arts and Culture.

Abhinaya's director, Nirupama says, "It was revealing to see the genuine interest among the Swiss, French and Afghans who drove hours to see the performances and to know more about our rich cultural heritage. Dur-

ing our programmes we could feel them watch with so much love for the arts, be it music or dance which we fail to notice here in India these days. Maybe they are not yet overfed with programmes, at least not many poor quality programmes which is a main reason for the disinterest among people here. Our audience enjoyed the programme and more did we."

One usual remark after every

City Dancers Captivate European Viewers

programme was that they had always seen one person render one style only for the entire evening and found 'our programmes more exciting with variety, good quality and lively young performers'.

At this point it may be pointed out that many a times merit is a casualty while in the choice of artists for international festivals or sent on cultural tours by the Government and cultural academies. It is unfortunate that many serious young performers who are committed and capable of rendering quality performances are ignored.

Well... all our previous cultural tours abroad were through our guru's initiative or dance companies established abroad. It was a wonderful experience as we were presenting from our own centre. We have had good response for the artistic abilities and been invited again next year for another tour. ■

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12/96

'97, So WHAT'S NEW?

Yet another year bites the dust and ushers in a new one. One would like, of course, to sweep a lot of this dust under the carpet and move on and hence, New Year drinks are gulped down and resolutions are made - hope springing eternal in the human mind. One hopes to find a touch of something new in monotonous routines.

What would a dancer aspire for the New year to bring with it? Loss of a few kgs around the hip, no doubt, and loads of programmes scattered all over the world. I, of course went on a

crash diet between 9 am. and 6 pm on the 1st Jan. and decided it was unhealthy.

Programmes, of course, were welcome. How about one in NCPA Bombay, another in the Tata Auditorium in Bangalore, the Academy Madras, the Rabindra Manch, Hyderabad? But I am sure all we'll get will be one in Bellary, in Kasargod, Hubli or Patna!

Of course, the New Year could always usher in a new costume in the new fangled three colours, stitched to perfection by Aiyylu of course. A

double layered temple jewellery set with HUGE earrings will round off the ensemble beautifully. On second thoughts, the building frown on my mother's brow put all thoughts of new costume and jewellery away from my mind.

How about a new production, I ponder, amply funded probably by the Ministry of Human Resources or better still, a private company. Something about global warming would do just fine, or of course, corruption would be more current. Thank God there are no censors in the dance field. I immediately erased all thoughts of such a production from my mind. I don't want all the local goondas after me!

I quickly started running out of new things to do in the New Year. My mother had a suggestion: how about practice and more practice, hours and hours of work in the class, she quipped sternly. Before I could conjure up an excuse she sat down purposefully with the takkal mane and I had to wind up!

Nupura's 18th Anniversary

The renowned Nupura school of Bharathanatyam, under the able guidance of guru Lalitha Srinivasan, recently celebrated its 18th anniversary with a two-day programme on December 7 & 8. The school has, over the years produced a wealth of talent and its students win laurels all over the country and abroad. Its ballets have been acclaimed for taut choreography and sophisticated production.

Lalitha believes that its young students are the hope of tomorrow, and therefore, the first day's programme concentrated on a recital by junior students who conducted themselves creditably. The performance was rounded off with a Nupurite's contemporary dance piece 'DWANDWA' conceived and choreographed by a few young and produced by a team of dancers, musi-

cians and young talent from allied arts. 'DWANDWA' dealt with the indecisiveness faced by an artiste who has to choose between his creative urges and the demands of his audience. The three dancers Ajay, Gowri and Sowmya gave a convincing performance. The troupe lead by Sowmya showed promise.

The second day saw two of Nupura's senior students Uma Sudheendra and Suma Krishnamurthy dance. Uma rendered the Atana Varnam with grace, while Suma performed a kriti in Bowli and an Ashtapadi with confidence. The two concluded with a brisk Ragamalika Tillana of Balamurali.

The students of Nupura then performed 'Folk Dances of India, a colourful rendition of dances from

different states. The Kelike, Tamasha, Suggi Kunita, Garba, Kummi, Holi and Karaga were well received.

Nupura now stands on the threshold of completing two decades in the dance field and its contribution has been immense, be it young dancers, new innovations, ballets, themes or its rich repertoire of Kannada items.

MANU

Dance Workshop in Mumbai

A workshop on Indian classical dance appreciation meant for laypersons and dancers was organised by Mandakini Trivedi at Prithvi Theatre, Juhu, Mumbai on December 1, 8, 15 and 22, '96.

This four-part workshop covered the founding principles of Indian dance, the dance of Shiva, Abhinaya, the vocabulary of Indian dance and the rasa theory.

Geetha Raja

Obituary

Chintalapalli Krishnamurthy



Chintalapalli Krishnamurthy noted vocalist passed away on Dec 29, 1996. He was 76.

Born in Gudibande of Kolar district Krishnamurthy was trained by Chintalapalli Venkata Rao of hallowed memory and the popular vocalist Chintalapalli Ramachandra Rao. With a vibrant voice Krishnamurthy was an exponent of the antique patanthara which he passed on to a host of disciples including his son Subbaganga.

He was felicitated by prestigious organisations like Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, Bangalore Gayana Samaja, Tyagaraja Gana Sabha, Krishna Sangeetha Sabha and had performed in and outside the State.

He was the recipient of the State Academy Award in 1993-94 and titles 'Gayana Chatura', 'Ganasudha Nidhi', 'Kalasindhu', 'Gayaka Bhushana' etc.

M.N.Ratna

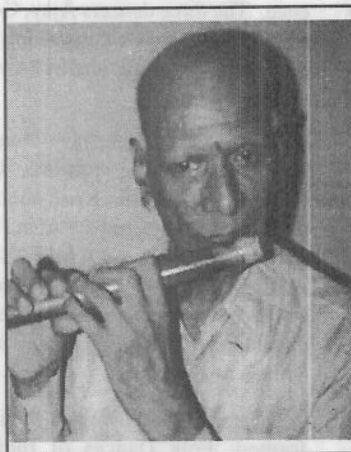
M.N. Ratna who was 68 passed away on December 30, 96 in Bangalore after a brief illness. Born in Hubli. Ratna had her training under Vasudeva Sastry and Bagalur Krishnamurthy.

Ratna used to render light classical varieties, later turned to sugama



sangeetha singing vachanas, bhavageetha in addition to devaranamas. She gave recitals at Bangalore Gayana Samaja, Malleswaram Sangeetha Sabha, Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, Mysore Dasara Festival, Delhi Kannada Sangha and had toured USA and London. She had recorded for gramophone of films and dance and a regular broadcasted.

She was the recipient of the State Academy Award and the Chowdiah Memorial Award. Her daughter M.S. Sheela is a leading vocalist in great demand.



B. Shivaramiah

B. Shivaramiah

B. Shivaramiah, noted flautist and guru of late B.N. Suresh passed away recently. He was 82.

Shivaramiah who had started giving flute concerts when obly 15, was an employee of the State Bank of Mysore and an amateur flutist. He was trained by Palladam Narasinga Rao and later from T.R. Mahalingam for nearly 40 years and had attained considerable command over the wind instrument.

Shivaramiah was a good flute teacher, having imparted his instrumental techniques to several artistes among whom are the well-known flautist B.N. Suresh.

He was felicitated by the Bangalore Gayana Samaja in 1982.

He leaves behind three sons and a daughter.

V.C. Lokiah

V.C. Lokiah, a well known personality in classical dance passed away recently in Bangalore. He was 82.

A recipient of the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award, Karnataka Kala Tilaka, Natya Kalanidhi and Natya Shiromani, Lokiah had toured Canada, China, Australia, Mexico, Romania, Pakistan, Germany, Italy, Sri Lanka and African countries.

Lokiah started his career as a vocalist under the guidance of veteran musicians in Madras and Calcutta and later turned to Bharatanatyam. He was a disciple of Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai of Pandanallur. He was trained in Kuchipudi dance too.

Lokiah popularised the classical dance for over six decades and was one of the senior nattuvans.

He was the first Bharatanatyam exponent from the State to travel around the world with renowned artistes, Ramgopal, Shanta Rao, Indrani Rehman, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Tara Chowduri and the Krishna Raos.